IN THE CLAIMS:

A complete listing of all the claims is as follows:

Claims 1 to 15. (Cancelled).

Claim 16. (Withdrawn).

A system for conveying filled bags by an upper edge region of said bags, said conveyor comprising:

a support frame;

first and second belt assemblies mounted to said frame each having a distal end for receiving said bags and a proximal end for discharging said bags, said assemblies each having journalled therein continuous belt means;

first drive means for rotatably driving at least one of said belt means;

at least one of said belt assemblies being pivotally mounted to said frame at a pivot point adjacent a proximal end of said at least one assembly for rotation about a vertical axis, for bringing said belt means into parallel contact with each other in a closed position; and

second drive means for pivoting said at least one assembly relative to the other of said assemblies about said pivot point for sequentially separating said assemblies at their

distal ends to receive a bag and subsequently converging to grip said bag between said belt means by the upper edge region of said bag, for subsequent conveying of said bag by said first drive means towards said proximal end.

Claim 17. (Withdrawn).

A system as defined in claim 16, wherein only one of said assemblies is pivotally mounted for converging and diverging relative to the other of said assemblies.

Claim 18. (Withdrawn).

A system as defined in claim 16, wherein said first drive means are for directly driving both of said continuous belt means.

Claim 19. (Withdrawn).

A system as defined in claim 16, further comprising a heat sealer mounted on or adjacent to said support frame, said heat sealer comprising a pair of parallel heated continuous belt means for receiving said upper edge region of said bag and heat sealing said bag while conveying said bag along said heat sealer, said heat sealer being positioned to directly receive said bags from said proximal end of said conveyor.

Claim 20. (Withdrawn).

A system as defined in claim 16, wherein said belt assemblies each include a housing having journalled therein at either end a rotatable pulley for supporting said continuous belt means under tension between said pullies.

Claim 21. (Withdrawn).

A method for conveying bags by an upper edge region of each of said bags, comprising the steps of:

providing a conveyor having a support frame and first and second continuous belt means each separately mounted within an assembly, said assemblies each having a distal end for receiving said bags and a proximal end for discharging said bags, at least one of said assemblies being pivotally mounted to said frame at a pivot point for pivotal movement about a vertical axis relative to the other of said assemblies, and drive means for driving at least one of said continuous belt means;

pivoting said at least one assembly about said pivot point whereby the distal ends of said assemblies diverge;

positioning a bag between said assemblies at said distal end;

pivoting said at least one assembly about said pivot point whereby said assemblies converge to a position wherein said

first and second belt means are in contact and parallel to each other, thereby gripping said bag between said belt means;

driving at least one of said belt means thereby conveying said bag towards said proximal end of said conveyor;

discharging said bag from said proximal end;

pivoting said at least one assembly about said pivot point to diverge the distal ends thereof to receive a subsequent bag.

Claim 22. (Withdrawn).

A method as defined in claim 21, wherein both of said belt means are directly driven by said drive means.

Claim 23. (Withdrawn).

A method as defined in claim 21, comprising the further step of discharging said bag into a heat sealer comprising a pair of heated moving bands for gripping and conveying a bag between said bands, and heat-sealing said bag while conveying said bag along said heat sealer.

Claim 24. (Withdrawn).

In a system for filling bags with a loose commodity, said system comprising a dispensing means for dispensing said commodity into said bags, the improvement comprising a conveyor

for gripping filled bags by an upper edge region of said bags, said conveyor comprising:

a support frame;

first and second belt assemblies mounted to said frame each having a distal end for receiving said bags and a proximal end for discharging said bags, said assemblies each having journalled therein continuous belt means;

first drive means for rotatably driving at least one of said belt means;

at least one of said belt assemblies being pivotally mounted to said frame at a pivot point adjacent a proximal end of said at least one assembly for rotation about a vertical axis, for bringing said belt means into parallel contact with each other in a closed position; and

second drive means for pivoting said at least one assembly relative to the other of said assemblies about said pivot point for sequentially separating said assemblies at their distal ends to receive a bag and subsequently converging to grip said bag between said belt means by the upper edge region of said bag, for subsequent conveying of said bag by said first drive means towards said proximal end.

Claim 25. (Withdrawn).

A system as defined in claim 24, wherein only one of said assemblies is pivotally mounted for converging and diverging relative to the other of said assemblies.

Claim 26. (Withdrawn).

A system as defined in claim 24, wherein said first drive means are for directly driving both of said continuous belt means.

Claim 27. (Withdrawn).

A system as defined in claim 24, further comprising a heat sealer mounted on or adjacent to said support frame, said heat sealer comprising a pair of parallel heated continuous belt means for receiving said upper edge region of said bag and heat-sealing said bag while conveying said bag along said heat sealer, said heat sealer being positioned to directly receive said bags from said proximal end of said conveyor.

Claim 28. (Withdrawn).

A system as defined in claim 24, wherein said belt assemblies each include a housing having journalled therein at either end a rotatable pulley for supporting said continuous belt means under tension between said pullies.

Claims 29 to 47. (Cancelled).

Claim 48. (Previously Presented).

A method of filling a bag with a material and sealing a bag; the method comprising the steps of:

(a) providing an empty collapsed bag on a bag holder;

(b) opening the bag;

(c) filling the bag with material;

(d) grasping the opposed top edges of the bag with a pair of grabber arms;

(e) pulling the grasped top edges of the bag apart;

(f) delivering the bag to a sealing apparatus; and

(g) sealing the bag,

wherein step (f) includes the steps of providing a pair of finger assemblies and moving the finger assemblies up, over, and down over the top edges of the bag.

Claim 49. (Previously Presented).

The method of claim 48, further comprising the step of moving finger assemblies away from each other to close the opening of the bag.

Claim 50. (Previously Presented).

The method of claim 48, further comprising the step of moving the bag toward the sealing apparatus while the finger assemblies are moving away from each other.

Claim 51. (Previously Presented).

The method of claim 48, wherein step (e) is being conducted while step (f) is being conducted.

Claims 52 to 57. (Cancelled).

Claim 58. (Previously Presented).

A method of filling a bag with a material and sealing a bag; the method comprising the steps of:

(a) providing an empty collapsed bag on a bag holder;

(b) filling the bag with material;

(c) grasping the opposed top edges of the bag with a pair of finger assemblies that move inwardly and down to grasp the top edges of the bag, the motion being with respect to the bag;

(d) delivering the bag to a sealing apparatus; and

(e) sealing the bag.

Claim 59. (Previously Presented).

The method of claim 58, further comprising the step of moving finger assemblies away from each other to close the opening of the bag.

Claim 60. (Previously Presented).

The method of claim 58, further comprising the step of moving the bag toward the sealing apparatus while the finger assemblies are moving away from each other.